Internet use reduces study skills in university students

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Credit: Swansea University

Research conducted at Swansea University and the University of Milan has shown that students who use digital technology excessively are less motivated to engage with their studies, and are more anxious about tests. This effect was made worse by the increased feelings of loneliness that use of digital technology produced.

Two hundred and eighty-five university students, enrolled on a range of health-related degree courses, participated in the study. They were assessed for their use of digital technology, their study skills and motivation, anxiety, and loneliness. The study found a negative

relationship between internet addiction and motivation to study. Students reporting more internet addiction also found it harder to organise their learning productively, and were more anxious about their upcoming tests. The study also found that internet addiction was associated with loneliness, and that this loneliness made study harder.

Professor Phil Reed of Swansea University said: "These results suggest that students with high levels of internet addiction may be particularly at risk from lower motivations to study, and, hence, lower actual academic performance."

About 25% of the students reported that they spent over four hours a day online, with the rest indicating that they spent between one to three hours a day. The main uses of the internet for the student sample were social networking (40%) and information seeking (30%).

Professor Truzoli of Milan University said: "Internet addiction has been shown to impair a range of abilities such as impulse control, planning, and sensitivity to rewards. A lack of ability in these areas could well make study harder."

In addition to the links between levels of internet addiction and poor study motivation and ability, internet addiction was found to be associated with increased loneliness. The results indicated that loneliness, in turn, made studying harder for the students.

The study suggests that loneliness plays a large role in positive feelings about academic life in higher education. The poorer social interactions that are known to be associated with internet addiction make loneliness worse, and, in turn, impact on motivation to engage in a highly social educational environment such as a university.

Professor Reed added: "Before we continue down a route of increasing

digitisation of our academic environments, we have to pause to consider if this is actually going to bring about the results we want. This strategy might offer some opportunities, but it also contains risks that have not yet been fully assessed."

Provided by Swansea University